

BMTS Article Digest August - September 2015

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of www.bmtsonline.com.

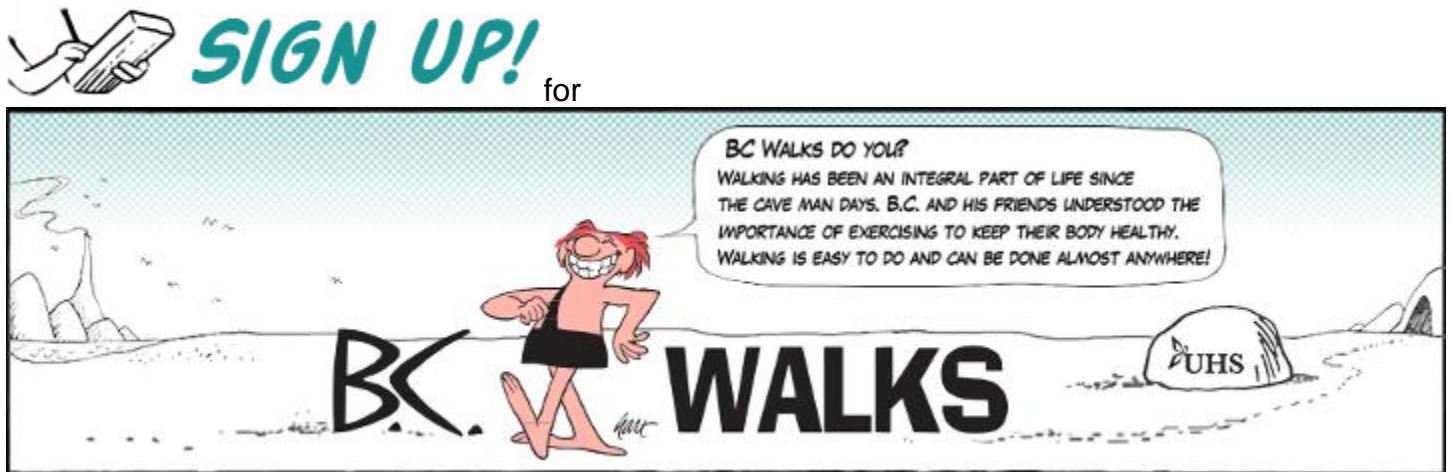
Scott



Take a look at the National Center for Bicycling & Walking's newsletter, **CenterLines**. You can also arrange to have it emailed directly to you.

See <http://www.bikewalk.org/newsletter.php>.

CenterLines is the bi-weekly electronic news bulletin of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. **CenterLines** is our way of quickly delivering news and information you can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities.



Go to www.BCWalks.com!

Check out this website for Bike & Pedestrian Information!



www.coexistnys.org

In particular, view the interactive educational video clips.

Sherwood and crew launched 'TechWorks!' in Binghamton

Valerie Zehl, Binghamton 2:05 p.m. EDT August 6, 2015



(Photo: ANDREW THAYER / Staff Photo)

Susan Sherwood had a vision that's quickly materializing on Water Street in Binghamton.

Its name is "TechWorks!" at the [Center for Technology & Innovation](#), but toss out the word "boring" if it occurs to you. This is no dusty backwater museum. It's as much about doing as seeing.

Think "send Morse Code messages," "pilot a flight simulator," "step inside a giant camera" and tons — literally — of other exhibits that make Sherwood's heart beat faster when she talks about them — citing detail after detail authoritatively at 78 rpm.

Its mission, "to document and present in context the inventions and industrial innovations of New York's Southern Tier," has been barreling forward since Sherwood and the board of directors accepted the donation of the old ice cream factory from Ed Levene, of United Auto Parts, in 2009.

What that descriptive one-liner doesn't mention is that the place is already packed with an A to Z (actually A to W, in one of its cavernous rooms) of local companies of many eras as well as components and inventions that have changed the world.

That's a claim Sherwood vehemently stands by: Many inventions and products that came out of upstate did nothing less than change the world.

And another claim she puts forward in both boldface and italics, with several exclamation marks: It's the Board that makes it all work; she's just the producer.

"We really have a stellar board," she said. "Each of them is regionally if not internationally known, and they're the source that keeps us moving forward."

Her passion and yes, money, started filling the old Binghamton Ice Cream building, also known as the Sealtest plant, with artifacts weighing from thousands of pounds to mere milligrams.

Sherwood is unpaid for all the energy and time — 48 or so hours a week in the building and extra time spent pursuing sponsors and gathering more stories — that she donates to the already-much-evolved site.

She not only brings boundless energy and constant humor to the place, she brings scholarship, although her credentials have to be pried out of her, so modest is she.

"In my previous life, I was a serious researcher, with 70-plus peer-reviewed publications, including five books, a dozen book chapters, and oodles of government reports and journal articles," she finally admitted. "These days, my writing is focused on fundraising and connecting the threads of regional innovation. I look forward to the time when TechWorks! is built and running, and I can spend quiet time at my writing table."

So don't mistake her upbeat effervescence for her being a lightweight. She's anything but.

She's elated to see that it's all coming together at warp speed, but gives all credit to her many sponsors and the busy-bee volunteers who swarm the place on a daily basis.

The prospect of tinkering with vestiges of yesteryear they saw during their careers at Ansco, IBM, Lockheed, Link and elsewhere drew in hundreds of dedicated volunteers. The boundless energy of the place captivates college, university and high school students who donate their time and creativity.

TechWorks! owes its burgeoning success to them all, she insists, but behind all their efforts scurries Sherwood, who hates talking about herself but is unstoppable when she discusses the Center for Technology & Innovation and TechWorks!

Vestal girl of the Sherwood line

Born in Endicott's Ideal Hospital 63 years ago, Sherwood grew up in what was then "downtown" Vestal, not too far from what is now better known as the Four Corners area. Vestal had about 4,000 residents then, she said, and the land on which Walmart now stands then supported a drive-in theater.

Her dad, W. Ben Sherwood, was the town's first attorney. Her mother, Ellen Ingeborg Delfs Sherwood, had met him when they both studied at Cornell University. She went on to become the first guidance counselor in the Vestal schools and an antique dealer on the side, Sherwood said.

Susan Sherwood emerged as the oldest daughter and the second of nine in the family, all raised on Cold Spring Farm at the west end of Castle Garden Road, where their property doubled as the neighborhood football and baseball fields.

She was often the ringleader of the neighborhood kids' activities, she said, always outside exploring, biking and "digging things up."

The TV clicked on for only an hour a day in their house, so the siblings bargained with each other to watch particular sports games or shows.

"You learn to negotiate in a big family," she said, noting that skill's application in her current role. She works hard to enlist corporate support for the site and its constant stream of events, often sponsored by the likes of the Raymond Corp., Binghamton Simulator, Huron Realty, NYSEG and other companies that offer tangible support in caring about the community.

A natural polyglot, she had little trouble learning French, Danish, German, Italian, Latin, Greek, Swedish and some Russian.

"But I can't spell in any language," she said with a smirk.

Math and science came equally easily to her, and as a designated "Mathlete," a team competition among schools, she could access entry to an Explorer post in Vestal, where she learned Fortran and became something of a computer nerd in a day before the term was created.

She spent her senior year not at Vestal High but in Denmark as a Rotary exchange student. Then she proceeded to Bryn Mawr outside Philadelphia, earning degrees in classical archeology and chemistry in 1974.

Curious career trajectory

Sherwood had wanted to become a biochemist originally, but Bryn Mawr had no such program. They did have a classical archeology program ranked fourth in the world, and a knock-your-socks-off Swedish professor who ignited her passion for that field.

Again owing to that benevolent association, she pursued higher education as a Rotary Foundation Fellow at Aarhus University in Denmark, where she achieved her master's degree in Roman archeology.

"Another highly employable field," she commented, deadpan.

Her computer skills enticed employers, and armed with the one-two punch of chemistry and archeology, a seemingly incompatible combination but in fact one that enabled her to understand environmental impact on ancient statues and the like, she went to work in DC immediately after graduation for the federal government in historic preservation.

"I was a G-man," she said with her trademark hearty laugh.

Her first task for them found her developing a computerized catalog of historic buildings and archeological sites owned by the National Park Service.

The NPS signed her paycheck 18 years for projects as far-ranging as acid-rain research and determining the source of deterioration of the Wieliczka Salt Mine statuary and chapels near Krakow, Poland, and the Taj Mahal in Agra, India.

“You could taste the air pollution in the winter in Agra,” she said. “I had to sleep with an air mask on.”

She’s gratified to know her team’s efforts there made a difference. “Now the air pollution is half what it was,” she said. Sherwood also served as lead author on several books about acid rain.

Such credentials bespeak a professional of considerable gravitas. Her personality bespeaks the unbridled joy of a gifted child dazzled by the array of jewels of the community around her.

“The giant camera is disabled-accessible,” she interjects in the middle of being pressed to tell her own story. “But my pride and joy is our new 1913 Link Automatic Piano.”

After she finishes her discourse on the wonders of that piece, which can emit the sounds of a piano, woodwinds or strings, she accepts the urging to talk, albeit reluctantly, about herself.

In 2001, she had a brief stint working for the Roberson Museum and Science Center, before taking off to actualize her own vivid and doable imaginings, for which she has the highest of all possible hopes.

“We can bring people off the highway,” she said. “We have internationally significant exhibits, and all these things were made here.”

People in their 60s, 70s and 80s in particular might want to stop to learn about the technologies that changed their lives before anybody ever thought about a “Silicon Valley.”

“The inventor of the lithium ion battery is a professor at Binghamton University, Stan Whittingham,” she said, then rattling off a short list of that battery’s many applications. “Cell phones, watches, electric cars, laptops — did you know that?!”

She hands over a pamphlet filled with other startling trivia, such as, “Nov. 1913 — World’s first text messages on land are sent in Morse Code between moving trains and stations in Binghamton and Scranton.” “1970 — Corning introduces first low-loss optical fiber for networks, revolutionizing the way the world communicates.”

And then, among many others, “Five onboard 4 Pi computers from IBM Owego on 1970s NASA Space Shuttles provided digital fly-by-wire signals to control hydraulic-driven actuators and interfaces between orbiter systems.”

Pop in to 321 Water St. sometime for a translation of that sentence.

And Sherwood shoots out emails that read as breathlessly as if she were speaking the words in person: “The team of folks who traipsed through our outdoor conversation forged a huge success ... The printer (repaired with parts made on a cutting-edge 3D printer at Triple Cities Makerspace “in the hood, as it were,” she said later with another laugh), originally designed for the IBM 360 system, printed its first page. The machine is in toddler mode now and the adults are all excited.”

She’s at least as enraptured every time her volunteers can bring an archaic piece of equipment back to life — and it happens often.

Sherwood not only speaks several miles a minute, but almost every sentence ends in an exclamation mark. Her constant enthusiasm is palpable, even if she leaves you panting as you struggle to take in whatever she’s discussing. She tries to keep her explanations comprehensible, but she simply knows too much to always pull it off.

She's on a mission, reaching into the realm of visions and creating physical realities. And she's moving forward at least as speedily as she talks — a remarkable feat.

Follow Valerie on Twitter @PSBValerieZehl and email her at vzehl@pressconnects.com.

Susan Ingrid Sherwood

Age: 63

Status at TechWorks!: volunteer

Hometown: Vestal

Home: Binghamton

Education: undergraduate degrees in chemistry and classical archeology from Bryn Mawr, master's degree in Roman archeology at Aarhus University

Family: Single, no children

Hobbies: "Sleeping" (said with a big laugh), cooking, swimming, gardening and teaching classes about technological inventions and ideas.

Special event: TechWorks! will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 29 for the Third Annual **Cooldest Dessert in Town** contest, during which visitors sample and vote on ice cream from local parlors. Guests can check out a view of the bikers at **the Binghamton Bridge Pedal** from inside the Giant Camera.

More information: Visit ctandi.org or call (607) 723-8600.

Destination bike shop a landmark in Endicott

Katie Sullivan

12:21 p.m. EDT August 28, 2015



(Photo: ANDREW THAYER / Staff Photo)

Tucked among the storefronts near the corner of Main Street and Exchange Avenue in Endicott, a more than 75-year old bike shop stands as a landmark among changing scenery in the town's business district.

Though the shop's ownership has changed hands a few times since it first opened, Babcock's Bicycles remains a destination store today for customers as far west as Athens and as far north as Cortland, who faithfully make the trip into town to visit "The Bike Shop," said owner Kevin Babcock, who bought the shop in 2004.

Outside the brick building at 110 W. Main St., traffic swells with the lunchtime rush on a weekday afternoon, but Babcock, 58, said it pales in comparison to the bumper-to-bumper scene during the heyday of businesses like IBM

and Endicott-Johnson. "At 4 o'clock in the afternoon when people got out at IBM," Babcock said, "traffic would be lined up almost to the (En-Joie) golf course."

Babcock, 58, of Endicott, rode his bike down the street often as a child — always passing Beach's Bike Shop — as part of a daily routine of biking around the neighborhood and playing sandlot baseball until the sun went down.

Babcock first started working at Beach's when he turned 16. He was hired there by the shop's first owner, Harry R. Beach, who owned and operated the shop for 40 years. Ted Makoske purchased Beach's Bike Shop in the late seventies and ran the store for 25 years as Ted's Bike Shop. Babcock had his own space a few blocks down on the corner of Main Street and Page Avenue at that time, and when Makoske retired, Babcock brought his business 110 W. Main St.

"Things have changed a lot," Babcock said.

Demographics, for one.

"Forty years ago, it used to be that a bike was a child's toy," Babcock said. "Now children don't really ride bikes, but adults do."

A good portion of Babcock's inventory is sold to young professionals looking to ride a bike to work a few days a week, as well as retirees, all "people that can see the health benefits," he said.

Inside the shop, a solid blue stripe lines the perimeter of the room, where mountain, road and recreational bikes abound from every corner — on two-tiered racks against the walls, hanging from the ceiling and on rotating double-decker bike carousels.

All manner of cycling gear bedeck the available wall space, from apparel and shoes to helmets and bike locks. Unique to this modern era of cycling is the availability of electronic derailleurs and even e-Bikes.

But arranged on a high shelf above the latest designs from Trek bicycles — the Wisconsin-based company that provides most of the bikes sold at Babcock's — vintage tricycles and bike paraphernalia point to the shop's well-known past.

In the 1970s, a gas price hike caused a bike boom which sent customers to Beach's Bike Shop in droves.

"On a Saturday afternoon, we'd sell 50 bikes," Babcock recalled. "It was crazy."

Beach owned both 110 W. Main St. and the building beside it, at 108 W. Main St. He rented out the second building to the owner of Percy's Restaurant, but the business closed in the early '70s, prompting Beach to capitalize on the bike boom and expand his shop into the second building. The opening between the two sides of the store is the same seen today at Babcock's.

"Ever since I've worked here that's how it's been," Babcock said.

Another standard at the shop is work ethic. Babcock runs his store with a small staff: himself and John Martens. In the busier months, he will also bring on a part time worker, but wearing several hats is familiar territory.

“When you worked for Mr. Beach,” Babcock said, “you did everything — you sold bikes, you swept the floor, you put bikes together, you repaired.”

It’s a classic small business mentality that has helped to set the bike shop apart from big box stores.

Babcock and Martens perform services and repairs in the shop, often on bikes purchased at stores where similar service is unavailable. “When the whole object is to bang out a bike and get it out as quickly as possible, those bikes need a lot of work,” he said.

Babcock and Martens have the unique situation of a longstanding clientele, some with bikes more than 40 years old — first purchased from Beach’s Bike Shop — and built in any combination of steel, aluminum or carbon fiber the bike’s respective release year saw on trend. The repair services at Babcock’s Bicycles cover a myriad of situations.

“Good bikes will hold up for a really long time,” Babcock said. “They’re worth the repairs.”

Recurrent customers come from miles outside of town, Babcock said, including Cortland, Hancock, and New Milford and Athens in Pennsylvania.

“We cover a pretty big area,” he said. “Some of them just know that this is ‘The Bike Shop,’ and they’ve always known it to be ‘The Bike Shop.’”

Though the nature of the shop has never changed, trends in the sport it promotes have evolved substantially over the years.

Babcock recalled the bikes on trend during the late ’80s, when Greg LeMond became the first American cyclist to win the Tour de France and bike seats were positioned high, so people had to stretch out to be able to reach the pedals. Fitting customers to those bikes is a different process than with current styles, so Babcock and Martens keep up-to-date with fitting trends through FitKit school certifications and classes administered through Trek bicycles.

“You have to analyze a person’s body and body structure and know how to fit a person onto a bike,” Babcock said.

Also new is the introduction of electronics to biking. Electronic shifting mechanisms, performance assessment software and even e-Bikes — some which don’t even require the rider to pedal — have painted a very different picture of the sport than what was sold at Beach’s Bike Shop in the last century.

“Business has changed a lot,” Babcock said.

What has not changed is the business’ designation as the oldest and largest bike shop in town, considered a destination store for providing a large inventory and selection unavailable at big box stores, as well as a strong service policy, Babcock said.

“We’ve had people that have been coming here since day one, and we’ve got new people all the time,” he said. “Things have changed a lot, the town has changed a lot, and people have stayed with us.”

On the back wall of the shop, a black and white photo hangs of Harry R. Beach, seated at a desk in what is now the service and repair room of Babcock’s Bicycles, a reminder of how it all began.

And at the front of the store, a certificate of the shop's latest honor has just been delivered by a mail carrier — an award from the National Bicycle Dealers Association, recognizing Babcock's Bicycles as one of the Best Bicycle Shops in the country, a fitting tribute to how far the shop has come.

Follow Katie Sullivan on Twitter @ByKatieSullivan.

Babcock's Bicycles

Owner: Kevin Babcock, 58, of Endicott

Located: 108-110 W. Main St., Endicott

Hours: 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday

Phone: (607) 754-0886

Website: babcockbikes.com

Senior Running and Walking Festival Success

By Plfteam@Positivelifeforce.Com

Written by Kenneth A. Howell



Senior Running and Walking Festival

On Saturday August 15th 2015, the Senior Running & Walking Festival was held on the Rail Trail in Vestal. We had several PLF members participated including:

5k Participants: Carla Moore, Kathleen Tewksbury, Mike Szeliga, Judy Ghosin, Martha Neer, Nancy Howell, Bill & Sylvia Hodel
5K & Wheelchair Race : Gary Shell
5K & Pushed Wheelchair: Ken Howell

The day was a great success. We had 113 participants ranging 56 to 90 years of age. The day consisted of a 1 mile walk, a 1 mile run, a 5K walk, a 5K run and a 2K Wheelchair race including self-propelled or being pushed by another Senior. Everyone was a winner. Finishing medals were given to all participants and trophies were given to those

that placed.

We are super proud of everyone who participated. We even had some PLFers place! Congratulations: Sylvia Hodel – 1st place in the Women's 5K walk. Bill Hodel – 3rd place in the Men's 5K walk. Judy Ghosin 2nd place in her age group for Women's 5K run. Nancy Howell took 2nd place for Women's over all 5K run. Gary Schell took a 1st place in the Wheelchair race.

There were so many amazing stories from the day. An 85 year young woman walking with a cane attended the 8 week training program preceding the festival. She started out walking from bench to bench

until she reached the overpass ½ mile away. Then she would turn around and walk back resting at each bench on the way. As the weeks went by she rested less and less, and on race day she walked the mile race without stopping to rest. This is a great victory for her and the event.

There was also a 75 year old man that ran the 5K in 24:44 minutes which averages 7:58 minutes/mile. I asked him to join a team of 12 runners to go to NH with me to run a 200 mile relay race from Canon Mt to Hampton Beach, NH in October and he has excitedly agreed to join us.

It truly was a GREAT DAY.

Ken Howell

Playgrounds for senior citizens? Genius idea.

Senior citizens like to have fun, too.



By [Laura Willard](#)

Playgrounds can be a lot of fun.

Kids love them. Parents are into them because physical activity is good for kids. (And let's be honest: It's also because we know they'll sleep well later)

But you know who else playgrounds are good for? Senior citizens!

Yep, that's right. Playground equipment isn't just for little ones.

Seniors enjoy doing more than sitting idly, reading a book, and gazing at the young whippersnappers swinging, sliding, and generally having a good time. They like to play, too!

In Spain, where the population is aging, senior-citizen playgrounds have been popping up for a while.

Not only do they provide a place for folks to enjoy physical activity, they also offer an opportunity for socializing.

[Public Radio International](#) shared the [video](#) below about playgrounds for senior citizens.

"It's very social," says Paz Vidal, a physical therapist. "[We] want to break the myth of the old person coming to the park and just sitting while grandkids play. And then going home. Kids can also have fun here. The parks help create family cohesion. And it's intergenerational."

The playgrounds in Spain sure seem to be serving their purpose.



GIF by Public Radio International.

"I am not someone to stay home. I get out a lot," said Franchesca, an 84-year-old in Spain who, in addition to enjoying being active, hasn't lost her sense of humor. "Because if you stay home, you spend all your time criticizing your kids, eh?"

And it's not just happening in Spain. It's starting to catch on in the U.S., too!

The nonprofit KaBOOM!, which generally builds kids' playgrounds, partnered up with Humana [to build intergenerational playgrounds around the United States](#). So far, they've built over 50. These playgrounds are created with people of all ages in mind.

"Play is a great connector for adults and seniors and the children in their lives. In addition to the cognitive and physical benefits of play, it can also reduce stress in adults and is proven to help combat toxic stress in kids," Sarah Pinsky, director of client services for KaBOOM!, told [Huffington Post](#).

I mean, just watch these folks enjoying themselves. Who wouldn't want to have fun like that at any age?

THE INSIDER

Is biking in NYC safe or dangerous? It depends on how you crunch the numbers

A monthly comparison of data over the last three years shows a 26% increase in the number of cyclist injuries. But the city and transportation advocates call that method of analysis misleading.

By [Andrew J. Hawkins](#)

Photo: Buck Ennis



The popularity of bikeDepending on how you crunch the numbers, biking in New York is safer than ever or slightly more dangerous.

-riding has exploded in New York City, but is it more or less safe in the age of Vision Zero? It depends on how you look at the numbers.

If you compare monthly data on injuries—as crime statistics are often analyzed—cycling is more dangerous than it was three years ago. Cycling injuries climbed 26% over that period, from 450 in July 2012 to 569 in July 2015.

Meanwhile, injuries to pedestrians fell 20% over the same span of time, from 854 in July 2012 to 686 in July 2015, according to New York Police Department statistics. Motorist injuries dipped 3%.

But transportation advocates argue that comparing monthly data is misleading and that annual safety numbers provide a much clearer picture of how cyclists are faring on today's streets. According to Transportation Alternatives, the city's leading two-wheeled advocates, there was only a 2% uptick in cyclist injuries over the last three years, from 3,926 bike riders injured July 2012 to June 2013, to 3,999 injured from July 2014 to June 2015.

"When you factor in how many more cyclists there are now compared to in 2012, the injury rate has dropped," said Caroline Samponaro, deputy director of the group.

The Department of Transportation prefers this method of data analysis as well, calling month-to-month comparisons "volatile." But monthly data comparisons can be useful, especially with regard to seasonal activity like biking. More cyclists take to the streets in the summer months than in the winter.

That said, the number of cyclists killed has stayed relatively flat—five deaths this year so far compared to six in the first six months of 2013—while pedestrian deaths have dropped to 60 this year so far. Mayor Bill 78 in the first six months of 2013. Mayor Bill de Blasio envisions zero pedestrian, cyclist and motorist deaths as part of his ambitious Vision Zero plan. And bike advocates believe the goal is within reach.

"How do we get to zero? We feel strongly there's a science to that," Ms. Samponaro said. "And that's protected infrastructure," aka protected bike lanes.

That process is slow going. There are only 39.9 miles of protected bike lanes in the city, or 9% of [the entire network](#).

Earlier this year, DOT Commissioner Polly Trottenberg said the 67% increase in cyclist deaths was [troubling and worthy of intense scrutiny](#).

"We are not happy about the increase in the number of cyclist fatalities," she said. "That is a number we're going to take a close look at and try to do a diagnosis about what happened."

Government Issues

Phoenix voters approve sales tax increase to fund transportation

Posted on August 27, 2015



Phoenix voters approved a proposed transportation plan, called Transportation 2050, which dramatically expands investment in Phoenix for bus service, light rail construction and street improvements.

Elements of the plan include building an additional 42 miles of light rail throughout the city, providing late night bus and Dial-a-Ride service citywide and repaving over 680 miles of arterial streets. The plan will be funded in part by a 7/10ths of a cent sales tax starting on Jan. 1, 2016.

"Phoenix is expected to double in population over the next 30 years, and managing that growth responsibly required the City — and the voters — to make some important and far-reaching decisions," said [Mayor Greg Stanton](#). "Now that we are making these critical investments in light rail, bus service, bike lanes and better roads, it's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work. Businesses looking to relocate or expand in Phoenix now know that our city is thinking ahead."

With approval of the plan, Phoenix residents have continued local support of transit service that has been in place since 2000. That year voters adopted Transit 2000, a transit plan that helped to build the Valley's current light rail line, introduce RAPID commuter service and expand the local bus network.

Connections to educational institutions are a key element of Transportation 2050. Light rail corridors will provide service to Grand Canyon University and ASU West, linking ASU and U of A campuses in downtown Phoenix on the Valley's current 20-mile light rail line.

In addition to new light rail corridors, Transportation 2050 will build out the majority of the city's bus service network, and introduce new bus rapid transit corridors along 24th Street, Baseline Road,

Thomas Road and elsewhere. The plan also funds more than 1,000 miles of bike lanes, 135 miles of sidewalk construction and will fund shade structures at all the city's bus stops.

The Phoenix City Council will consider next steps for the plan at its Sept. 8 Policy Session, including the formation of a citizens transportation commission to oversee implementation of the plan and how funds will be spent.

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Surgeon General's prescription for health: Walk more

A Call to Action on how to get America back on its feet

Blog post by Jay Walljasper on 09 Sep 2015

Jay Walljasper, Better! Cities & Towns

We've always known walking is good for us—it burns calories, reduces stress and helps the environment.

But we never knew how really great it is for us until the just released Call to Action on Walking from US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who explains, “An average of 22 minutes a day of physical activity – such as brisk walking – can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes. The key is to get started because even a small first effort can make a big difference in improving the personal health of an individual and the public health of the nation.”

Surgeon General Murthy announced a national campaign to encourage Americans to walk more and make all communities safer and easier for walking. His office will partner with schools, citizens groups and businesses to meet these goals.

“Walking is a simple, effective and affordable way to build physical activity into our lives,” Murthy adds. “That is why we need to step it up as a country ensuring that everyone can choose to walk in their own communities.”

The landmark report---which is being compared to the Surgeon General's 1964 warning on the dangers of smoking--is based on definitive medical evidence that moderate physical exercise boosts your health cuts your chances of diabetes, dementia, depression, colon cancer, cardiovascular disease, anxiety and high blood pressure by 40 percent or more.

A major study released this year shows that lack of exercise is twice as deadly as obesity, according to Cambridge University researchers who studied more than 300,000 people over 12 years. Their findings match another comprehensive study that found sitting for long periods is linked to higher death rates.

This explains why the Surgeon General and a growing chorus of health care experts are singing the praises of walking.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) recommends Americans walk at least 30 minutes a day five days a week---or bike, run, swim, dance, garden do aerobics and play sports. (For kids, it's 60 minutes a day seven days a week.) Taking a walk is the exercise that people stick with most over time, according to the American Heart Association.

“Walking is like medicine for my patients. If walking was a pill or surgical procedure,” it would be all over the news, says Dr. Bob Sallis, a family practitioner in Fontana, California.

“You don’t have to be an athlete to be physically active, just walk, walk, walk!” says the Bernard J. Tyson, president of Kaiser Permanente, one of America’s largest health care providers that powers the Every Body Walk! Collaborative (involving more than a hundred other organizations from the National PTA to AARP to the National Association of Realtors) to get more Americans walking.

Walking stands out as Americans’ favorite aerobic activity because it’s free, easy, available anywhere---and, most of all---it’s fun. Six in ten Americans take a walk at least once a week, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the number of Americans walking has risen six percent since 2005. That adds up to 20 million more people on their feet.

The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that eleven percent of the nation’s trips are now made by walking. That rises to 28 percent for all trips under one mile, including 35 percent to work, 40 percent to shopping and 46 percent to religious services.

While ninety four percent of Americans participating in a national survey said that walking is “good for their health,” 79 percent admitted they “should walk more.”

So what’s stopping them?

- 40 percent of people said their “neighborhood is not very walkable”
- 40 percent said there are “few places within walking distance of my home”
- 39 percent said “they don’t have time”
- 25 percent cited a “lack of sidewalks or speeding traffic”
- 25 percent cited “no one to walk with”
- 13 percent cited “crime in my neighborhood”

While a few of the major factors are personal, most involve the design of communities.

“Everyone deserves to have a safe place to walk or wheelchair roll,” Surgeon General Murthy . “But in too many of our communities, that is not the reality.”

Most Americans support significant changes in our communities to promote this goal, according to the survey sponsored by Kaiser Permanente. Eighty percent “want to design streets to make walking safer” (even if it means driving slower); 71 percent “want better enforcement of speed limits” (even if it means driving slower), and 54 percent “want communities where destinations are within walk distance” (even if it means building homes closer together).

These steps are popular because they are not some radical upheaval of our way of life, but a common-sense readjustment. Walking has always been one of the most elemental human acts, central to our lives the same as breathing, eating and sleeping. Making streets and neighborhoods more safe, convenient, comfortable and interesting for people traveling on foot (or rolling in wheelchairs) is a sensible return to traditional values. It not only enhance our health, but enriches our lives by better connecting us to people and places in our communities.

Jay Walljasper writes, speaks, edits and consults about creating stronger, more vital communities. He is author of The Great Neighborhood Book and All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons. His website: JayWalljasper.com